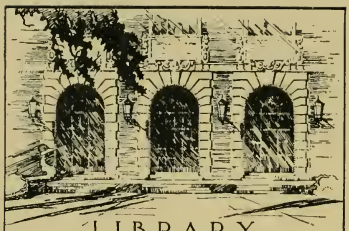

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WOMAN'S WORK

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS

OF THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

Two Papers read by the Right Rev.

ALLAN BECHER WEBB, D.D.,

BISHOP OF BLOEMFONTEIN,

At the Missionary Conference of 1875, and at Rugby.

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OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE

Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

[The profits arising from the sale of this publication will be given to the Ladies Association of S. P. G.]

The Supply and Training of Women

FOR

MISSION WORK ABROAD.

Is there need, in the mission-field, of women devoting themselves to the service of the Church? At least as much as in England; and relatively, much more. For we have not at our disposal a supply of disengaged women who have leisure for employment in Church work. Therefore I must now speak of women giving themselves, whether distinctly as Sisters, or pledged in some other way, at least in will and purpose, for a time, to the work of God and His Church under the Bishop. Otherwise, women may be poured into our colonies, but they are sure to be absorbed by marriage. Far from desiring to depreciate the good which they may do in this condition, I only wish that the immense influence which they will exercise, for good or evil, could be more deeply impressed on them. What I mean is that, for distinct and definite work which can be entrusted to them, they are lost to a Bishop upon their marriage,

unless perhaps in a few exceptional cases. This must very frequently be the case at home, but is far more so in colonial life, where domestic affairs, the care of children, &c., quickly employ more than all the energies and health of most women in the upper classes, obliged, as they are, to do almost all which at home would ordinarily be done by servants. There is no time nor strength left, which they can place at the disposal of the missionary.

What, then, are to be the wants supplied by such devout women?

First, that of God's honour.—As "women professing godliness," their mission will be to express the life of the Body, which is the Bride of Christ, in its heavenward aspect, and to exercise, as it were, the power of the burnt-offering. Thus would the King have pleasure in the beauty of His daughters, whose life is one of union with God, of power with God, of witness for God, and for His absolute right to all that men have and are. So would there be a perpetual memorial going up, and the Lord would be entreated for that land.

Secondly, that of Man's good.—As the "merciful women" (so our natives would call them) they extend the mission-work of Christ, in good works—such as education, personal influence, teaching, visiting, nursing, and ministering, even as the holy women also did in the old time. We know that home is the centre and fountain of social life, and woman is the centre of home. Such as the women are, such are the homes, and such the civilisation and Christianity of society. To reach that centre, to purify it and consecrate it for the kingdom of God, is woman's especial work.

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If so, is not woman forsaking her true place, by leaving home and country to work elsewhere? Yes, if that "home" were not itself only a part of a larger circle; the family of man, and the family of God. But our Lord's own answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" forbids us to think of narrower limits to our duty. And therefore, to "do our duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call us" may involve more than at first sight appears. It may involve helping to plant the "home" of God's Church, in foreign lands. And for this, women are needed. Therefore, women must go. The only question is — and it is the question asked by the Lord God himself, "Whom shall I send?"

I. There must be a supply. And this supply will depend upon three things. 1. A high view of mission-work, as the King's own service, pervading the Church, and based not upon sentiment, but upon principle. 2. Upon God doing our Church and our people the honour to call a sufficient number of her daughters to this work, and on their hearkening to His call. 3. Upon the dedication, or at least consent, of parents; for—except perhaps in some very exceptional case, no child should go forth without a father's blessing, and a mother's loving, albeit tearful prayers. We know that it is easier to give ourselves up to even an ordinary trial or suffering, than to give up another whom we love.

The first of these conditions can be promoted by informing the intelligence of the Church at large; and the others, by prayer to the Lord, Who holds all hearts in his hands, Who gives the word.

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duty in that state of life to which it has hitherto pleased God to call them; woman of practical good sense as well as devotion; ay, and women, too, who might have the world, and wealth, and honour, and the culture and the delights of the age, who would have to leave houses and lands and brethren and sisters, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. (*b*) *Those who have a vocation* for such a life. Need I say that there is such a thing as a "vocation" for individuals, as well as for the Church collectively? There are "good works prepared for us to walk in." We are sent into the world for a definite purpose in the Kingdom of God.

But how find out, it is asked, if I have a vocation?

1. Surrender the will absolutely to God, afresh; be ready to accept the issue, crushing, in the name of Jesus, all cowardly desire for convenient ignorance as to your possibilities of usefulness. Place yourselves at the disposal of the Great King.

2. Meditate on such passages as Isaiah vi.; take trouble to find out God's mind as to missions; His point of view, in the light of the Word of God; alive and attentive, be ready to catch the answer, through the smallest and stillest voice, to your appeal—"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

3. In the same attitude of listening and of expectation, silently watch God's providence. Notice especially any side which He seems to "hedge up," saying, Thou shalt *not* walk thitherward.

4. When your own fixedness of will has been sufficiently tested, by a time of silent waiting and seeking guidance of God only, then consult whatever guide He may have provided for you; tell every-

thing; the balance of duties; your defects; your points of conscious power; your state of health, in body and in nerves.

5. If advised to regard yourself called to the work, give special time to prayer, that your parents, or others whom you are bound to consider and consult, may love God better than they love you, and give you up to Him, if He asks it of them.

6. Then wait the issue, as silently as possible. Do not "break through." Respect God's own ordained bounds, in aspiring to a life of closer union with Him through self-sacrifice. And then?—"The meek shall He guide in judgment."

II. The vocation being clear, and the providence clear, the next step is actual preparation for the new duty. In some ways, all foreign mission work demands the same qualities, personal devotion to God being taken for granted.

1. All such work demands fair health, unshattered nerves, and that general equableness of spirits which so largely depends upon the physical state. A morbid mind or conscience is unfit for such work as this.

2. It cannot be too much impressed upon us that the education and mental discipline which help most to build up the typical character of woman are also the best for those called to any unusual work. For in whatever measure a woman becomes unwomanly, so far exactly is her usefulness as well as charm impaired. She can lose no grace naturally belonging to her, without losing at the same time power, influence, and capacity for the work for which she was formed. We all know what that work was—to be a help-meet for man. I say this of the un-

married as well as the married; and no training can be good, in which this her calling as "the fulness and mysterious complement" of man's nature is not kept in view. But in her secondary and supplementary character, carefully directed, there need not be feebleness; on the contrary, there should be fortitude. In the inspired picture of "the virtuous woman," the quality which is made most prominent is strength. "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms; strength and honour are her clothing." How far this ideal of the valiant woman, which the wise man has drawn, is from any approach to what is commonly called a "strong-minded woman," will be seen by studying the details. And, indeed, I could desire no better training for a missionary woman than one which would enable her to carry out the details and follow the example of "the virtuous woman." For, under the simpler and harder conditions of life which exist in far colonies, she must, indeed, be like the "merchant's ships bringing her food from afar, rising while it is yet night, and giving meat to her household and a portion to her maidens; looking well to the ways of her household, and eating not the bread of idleness." Indeed, almost all the details in which this womanly strength is set forth are exactly those in which skill would be found most useful in a mission. There is, first, the cunning and industrious hand. Perhaps only a woman can understand the education of the needle, and the real moral discipline involved in learning to use it skifully; for practical mission purposes, what an excellent training is provided, in learning to do plain work exquisitely well! It gives even a

mechanical education to the fingers, making them apt tools for all other skilled work, such as is needed in cooking, nursing the sick, &c." "She maketh fair linen and selleth it." No one can properly overlook that which he is incapable of doing well himself, if necessary; though it is also true that many do that well who have not the power of making others do it. It may be almost impossible to supply this power by education, where it is naturally lacking; but it is a quality most necessary in women employed in the mission work, and one which ought to be carefully trained and disciplined. We all know that it is far easier and less troublesome to do a thing one's self, than to multiply power by getting many others to do the same well. Still, it is exactly the administrative faculty which is most valuable, in the lands where there are many untrained and few trained hands.

3. All work in the mission-field abroad needs some practical knowledge of common things; and, what is still more important than any one branch of practical knowledge, a readiness to observe and to learn and to do anything whatever that may have to be done, in the often unexpected contingencies of foreign work. To remember the Scotch proverb, "*Can do* is easily carried about."

4. But then, at the same time, it is well that some distinct branch of work should be mastered; the choice being determined, to some extent, by the place in view. For India, where native servants are abundant, it is specially desirable that ladies working in the Zenanas should be clever in fancy work, and have a talent for music, &c. For South Africa, where the climate is much better, but the

lack of good servants proverbial, a lady must be prepared to do everything for herself, and a good deal for the household. One of the great hindrances to a really missionary spirit among colonists in that part of the world, is the almost absorbing claim of household duties. Mind and soul alike are in danger of paralysis, through the undue and unavoidable proportion of care for outward things. Thus the whole standard of mental and spiritual attainments is lowered. There is no appetite for mental food, or for spiritual ventures. To meet this lowered condition of intellectual and moral life, Christian women—and the more highly cultivated and refined the better—must learn to understand that life, and to share it, so far as its lawful and necessary claims are concerned. To share it; not to sink to the level of its unspiritual materialism, but in order to raise it and glorify it. To manifest, after the example of the Virgin, blessed among women, to whom the angel of God was sent at uncouth Nazareth, the compatibility of rude household work with the spirit of recollection and adoration. To carry on the mission of the Eternal Son—who took part in flesh and blood, that we might be partakers of the Divine nature. For other's sakes as well as their own, they must be able to turn their hand to anything. And, of course, the more they learn in England, the more serviceable will they be yonder.

5. Some may be so conscious of some special gift of God, that they may find in this their landmark. They have, *e.g.*, always felt at home with the sick more than with anyone else, or with children: and they judge rightly that this is their own "prepared"

path, whether or not they see as yet whither it may tend Music will be of use everywhere, and so will drawing, as far as my experience goes.

If the matter is determined, communication should be held, as soon as possible, with the Bishop for whose diocese they are desirous of offering themselves, or with his Commissary. In most cases (not in all), I should myself recommend residence for a time in some community, in order that, among other reasons, the adaptability for living and working with other fellow-workers may be tested. In all cases, I should urge attention to a rule of life, and especially a rule of meditation and devotion, so necessary where life will be very distracting. I should earnestly recommend some intellectual training in systematical theology and Church history, in order to meet inquiries. I should require the assurance of thorough, hearty, intelligent loyalty to the Anglican Church, to guard against restlessness. I should warn any applicant of the temptations likely to arise from the withdrawal of much sustaining power in the way of religious activity and excitement around us here; and against a craving for much demonstrative sympathy. I should prepare her for the necessity of retaining a high standard and aim, and a noble ideal of what mission work and communities of mission workers should be; but, at the same time, of being at peace in the midst of much actual imperfection, many very petty, prosaic, commonplace, and harassing trials. The virtues I should bid her cultivate would be hope, patience, and endurance, as well as, of course, unwearying love and sweetness of temper.

But — to end as we began — for one work or another, *women are needed.* They have their own place and work in Christ's Church militant—a work which the clergy can no more do, than they can do the work of the clergy. All members have not the same office ; though even those that seem feeble are "necessary." But in her feebleness, love shall be the secret of her strength :—

> "The citadel,
> Of courage and heroic fortitude,
> Which in the centre of a woman's heart,
> Is stablished, whatsoever outwardly
> Of doubt or womanly weak fear prevail."

If only, with a true heart, each one shall listen to the call of God Almighty, "Whom shall I send ?" it will be from those whom He chooses that the answer shall come—"*Send me.*"

THE WORK OF WOMEN AT HOME

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

"Let me write the ballads of a nation, and whoever will may make the laws!"

May we not say that it is the women who inspire the ballads, while the men make the laws?

The reign of Love is mightier than the reign of Law. Law touches the actions only; Love touches the springs of action. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. xxiii. 7.) Touch the heart of England, and the life blood will flow forth through every artery, and back again through every vein. And it is the women of England who influence the heart of England; if silently, so much the more surely.

Our thoughts on the "Supply and Training of Women for Mission work abroad," forestall most of what might here be said, as to that part of women's work.

Those thoughts may be roughly summed up in the following words:—For the development of true life—of church life—home life—women are needed, everywhere; women who have realised the ideal of

that life. If needed everywhere, then abroad as well as at home. And if women of the right sort, with leisure for work, are not to be found on the spot, then they must be sent forth from the mother-land. Some must go.

And who? Not the *useless* members of home and church. Not those who have a distinct home-duty that none other can do for them; *e.g.* a wife or mother. But, *those who would be missed*, wherever they have lived; and *those whom God has called*, by His special inward vocation, and by His co-operating Providence: giving them "a sound mind in a sound body," and circumstances that leave them free to respond to that inward call.

If we thoughtfully review these classes, we shall find among them *four*, willing to go forth for the Master, yet commanded to stay.

1. Those tied by untransferable home-duties.

2. Those forbidden to go, by parents, or others in authority.

3. Those who, in whatever way, are not strong enough.

4. Those who are conscious of no vocation for this special form of work.

All these, from among even the small number of those whose wills are absolutely yielded to their Lord, so as to care little where or how they spend themselves for Him!

Many more there are, absolutely given up to Him, hitherto, and yet willing and able, in the strength of the body of Christ, to do something. Power is needed, of every possible kind; physical, mental, moral, social, spiritual. And there are many in the Body of the Baptized, conscious of power in some

way or other, and willing to put it forth, if under authority, and without much of that dreaded element, personal responsibility—many such there are, who would be useless, if alone.

And every educated woman in England, whether she realize it or not, is daily helping, or hindering, the work of Foreign Missions. For it is Christ's work; one that cannot be ignored or neglected without sin; and it is not of men only, but of women also, that our Lord has said: "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth."

Women at home, then, have a manifold work for the Mission-field abroad. Let us ponder over it a while, in detail.

1. Women of this generation train the next generation.—The tone of thought and action as to Foreign Missions, fifty years hence, will depend, to an extent that can never be known on earth, upon the young mothers of the present day. In Sacred History, it is not without deep significance that the names of the mothers of Judah's kings are so often recorded.

Let us recall our own childhood; our nursery tales and pictures; the food and exercise provided for our imagination and affections; and then our school-room days, at home or elsewhere. Could we not tell each other of a lack never to be supplied, or of memories that can never grow cold—as to interest kindled, or unkindled, in Mission-work—by pictures and stories, and Children's Missionary Meetings or Guilds, and little plans for "helping the good Missionaries," such as God's little children, still "glistening with baptismal dew," delight in? If we were early taught to pray for Foreign Missions,

has the habit ever wholly died away? If not, is that habit easy to acquire?

The influence is obvious. The only question for each to ask herself is: "What am I doing to help or hinder the Church of the future, in this, her world-wide Mission?"

II. Women can influence general society—their equals, in age and position, as well as little children. The more refined and cultivated they are, the greater will be their power over others. Mere "conversation" is a power for good or evil, compared with which the much-talked-of power of modern inventions is but a plaything.

Now, what are the ordinary topics of conversation, —apart from the way of handling them? There are some, indeed, that were better unnamed; others, in which it were well for women to remember Apostolic teaching, and avoid intruding into things that they know not. Others again there are, which are mischievous simply from their utter folly; involving that "*foolish* talking and jesting, which are not convenient;" quite distinct from the innocent, light-hearted talking, as "children of the free," which Our Father will never blame.

But, while we talk fluently on topics of "general interest, how often do any of us dare to allude to "Missions," as to a topic that *ought* to be of general interest?

The Arctic Expedition, the Ashantee War—these have their champions in abundance; among England's Volunteers for these ventures, who is not proud to reckon a personal friend? But carry on the topic of "ventures for a noble cause," and speak of a friend or brother, fit for the highest posts in England,

and yet, gone forth to be a "Missionary;" and who is not made conscious, that if the contemptuous wonder be unexpressed, it is chiefly through mere courtesy?

These things ought not so to be: and Christian women are responsible, to a great extent, for not suffering it so to be. We need not "drag in" the subject of Missions; but "a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

To uplift the Mission-banner from the mire; to silence—if only by their own eloquent silence—the first word of ridicule or of ignorant impatience, this is within woman's province, and the Master expects it of her. And then, by quietly-told *facts*, to turn this negative testimony to what is positive, and, God helping her, to win enthusiasm for the cause that in her watchful hearing has been put to shame,—is this too much for any Christian woman to do or dare for her Lord? "In the Name of our God, we will set up our banners!"

III. With a view to this, WOMEN ARE BOUND TO BE WELL-INFORMED, as Christians and as Church-women, of the progress of Church Missions.

It would be counted "ignorance," not to have heard of the Fiji Islands, and their late annexation. It is a more pardonable ignorance, not to have heard of—many a new colony of the King of kings—many a fair territory annexed to His possessions? Are we to live through our appointed term in the world's long history, and do nothing to correct the notion (hardly ever attacked at all till lately!) that an "interest in Missions" is the amiable peculiarity of *some* Christians, instead of being the common interest of all?

IV. Women can use their pen for Mission-work. Not as "authors," necessarily; though some might well expend on such a cause the powers bestowed upon them for the good of the Church and the glory of God; but in ordinary correspondence. A real habit, once formed, of trying to widen and deepen Mission-work influence, in *any way whatever* that the Master may point out, would soon exert its power over a woman's ever-ready pen.

Many an idle note, about—nothing at all—would, by degrees, give place to some gentle reminder of a far-off corner of the earth. We do not mean a "begging letter," but a word as from sister to sister, just naming—as one who cannot help naming—the far-off brother!

Might not something be done, moreover, yet more directly and definitely, by a little forethought and combined action? We have heard of an invalid who spends her long leisure hours in writing illuminated letters, exquisitely penned, full of holy and helpful thoughts, to soldiers in India. Other friends arrange as to the sending; hers is simply the willing and skilful hand; adding to the words of Christian sympathy some home-flower, thoughtfully chosen according to the time of year, and painted at the beginning of the letter, to bring back thoughts of home and "mother."

Could not some of our lonely Missionaries be remembered thus practically, in some way suited to their need? And especially in parishes which God has honoured by taking from them one of his own volunteers for "Foreign Service." Could not some combine to send forth a stream of regular information as to home-life and work, thus quickening sympathies,

and giving scope for that great law of action and re-action between the heart and the extremities, which rules the spiritual as well as the natural body? "Love chiefly grows in *giving*."

V. WOMEN CAN "WORK." No one can deny that this is a fitting occasion for her special ministry.

Many agencies of this kind are already in operation: Working Parties, Work Societies, &c., where materials are given out, to be sold, here or abroad, when made up, for the friends of the Mission.

Details would be needless. Here, as in all other things, judgment is needed; that "right judgment" which our Church bids us pray for "in all things," and which the All-ruling Spirit of God will condescend to give us, even for the details of a Missionary Working Party! There will be difficulties; there may be mistakes; but the effort is none the less to be made, where God points it out as suitable.

Might not work for Foreign Missions, in some such practical form, become a motive for little girls, in the often unattractive task of "learning to work?"

VI. To *some* women, among those whose Mission-work lies at home, is given a special calling; even that of YIELDING UP—not themselves, but what is dearer than themselves—SON OR DAUGHTER, for Foreign Service in the KING's army.

"Will you give me *Coley?*" That question, asked by Bishop Selwyn, of the mother of Patteson—has it not become almost proverbial? We cannot but suspect that the secret dread of such a question is keeping back many a Christian mother from opening her heart to Christ's Commandment as to Foreign Missions. "I fear I have brought it on myself," a mother has been heard to say, when her son had

gone forth; "I brought him up with such a high ideal of Missionary work!"

And are not many kept back from honest prayer, that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth labourers into His Harvest, by the secret reservation, "Only, Lord, not *my* Son!—not *my* Pastor!"

VII. Women can show hospitality.—"A certain woman received Him into her house," has been written again and again, in the Record on High, concerning many a "Martha," and her receiving of Christ Himself, in those of whom He has said: "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me."

To have "lodged strangers"—for Christ's sake, not for mere kindness' sake—is a mark given by St. Paul of those eligible for a special office in the early Church. It is for the "Sarah" to provide for the strangers whom Abraham is not forgetful to entertain. Lydia, Europe's first convert to Christianity, welcomed to her house the first Missionary of the Church. Circumstances may have changed, in these less simple days; but should not the Missionary's heart be cheered, when at home for awhile, by the manifestation of the same spirit? And is it not for "the glory of the same Lord, Who accepts, in every age, each kindness done to His servants as done unto Himself?"

VIII. Women can pray.—This is the greatest work of all; the secret strength of all other work.

True, it belongs to men, as much as to women. Yet, in speaking of women's work, I would especially remind you that this is a work within your reach at all times. The quiet intercession of many an invalid, the resolutely-dedicated time, taken out of a life of active service, for the great work of intercession for

Missions, and *united definite prayer together* for special needs—these weapons have a power in the whole Mission army, which Eternity alone will fully reveal. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." There are those—

> "Whose prayers and silent efforts Heaven employs
> To do the good, while others make the noise."

Many ways of working at home for Missions abroad have doubtless been omitted in the foregoing sketch, *e.g.* distributing periodicals, collecting money, &c., as well as giving money themselves, according to their ability. Some who cannot go in person, but who would be willing so to do, may have the means of enabling another to go, by providing, or combining with others to provide, what is needful for the cost of passage, outfit, and after-maintenance. Love is ingenious in self-sacrifice; fertile in resources; "strong as death!" Why multiply suggestions? "Charity never faileth."

One more way of helping forward the work of Missions abroad must, however, be definitely named, being less obvious, perhaps, than others—PERSONAL FAITHFULNESS IN HOME DUTIES. The satirist must have no "Mrs. Jellyby" among our Mission-workers to hold up to ridicule—a ridicule involving the holy cause which such a one caricatures. They must "guide the house;" they must "give none occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully."

It must be made evident that their interest in Missions is based on principle, not on feeling; and that this principle rules nothing less than their whole lives. A holy self-restraint, the mark of the Cross, must stamp every common duty. The intelligence, as well as the affection, must be evidently

enlisted. There must be no silly talk about "interesting natives," &c.; no excited running to and fro, to more Missionary Meetings than they can inwardly digest, while their own servants, and the obvious claims of those at hand, are uncared for.

Our women at home, if they would be "fellow-helpers to the truth," must be "keepers at home;" they must learn something of self-mastery and self-sacrifice; that so their witness may have power, and those who see that their charity extends to the ends of the earth may also see that it "begins at home."

After all, the work is one, throughout all the world. For there is but one Lord; and "He is the Great King over all the earth." "It is God which ruleth in Jacob,"—here, in the Church at home,—"and unto the ends of the earth." Even there, the King must have His daughters, honourable women.

If even the annals of Heathendom are often made bright by the story of woman's devotion, and even the Spartan mother could add fortitude to her love, shall it not be reserved for Christian women to show—

> "A fairer strength than this,
> Strength linked with weakness, steeped in tears and fears,
> And tenderness of trembling womanhood,
> But true as hers, to Duty's perfect Law?"

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